



ANITA WANLESS

# IODINE

Element Symbol: I  
Atomic Number: 53

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International Year of  
**CHEMISTRY**  
**2011**



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# IODINE

**Element symbol:** I

**Atomic number:** 53

Iodine has the symbol “I” and the atomic number 53. The name arises from the Greek word iodes meaning violet or purple and this refers to the striking colour of iodine vapour. Iodine exists under normal conditions as a bluish-black solid with a metallic sheen. It has a somewhat irritating and distinctive odour.

Iodine was discovered in 1811 – 200 years before the International Year of Chemistry – by Bernard Courtois (1777-1838) who lived and worked in Paris. He was trained as a chemist and identified crystals of iodine as by-product formed during the manufacture of saltpetre or potassium nitrate – a vital ingredient in gunpowder – from seaweed.

Iodine is vital for human health and is an essential trace element. The iodine atom forms an important substituent on the thyroid hormones such as thyroxine, which control metabolic rate and normal development in children. Iodine can be obtained in the diet from seafood and dairy products and can also be obtained from foods containing iodised table salt. Today some thyroid conditions are treated with synthetically derived thyroxine as a hormone replacement. Patients who undergo surgery may be familiar with iodine in povidone-iodine or betadine as a topical antiseptic that stains the skin a characteristic brown colour.

The iodine symbol “I” is also the initial of my six-month old daughter Isla Helen born 5 May 2010.

***Provided by the element sponsor Mal McLeod***

## ARTISTS DESCRIPTION

Iodine is sourced from kelp and is essential in human health, but also used to make gun powder. The artwork depicts a stylised image of kelp and uses Betadine to print the background colour.

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